

Speech of Mr. Ruben Berrios, Puerto Rico.

March 20, 1981.

Mr. Chairman, Brothers,

I would like to thank you for the invitation made by the President of the M.E.P., to make some brief comments regarding the topic of human rights that is closely linked with the topic of decolonization and independence, but before introduce my topic, since I have the opportunity of addressing you after having heard the introduction of Mr. Bernt Carlsson, to express to him also the gratitude of the Partido Independista for all the efforts he has made on behalf of our cause. I would like to tell Bernt something very personal, something that politician. wants at regarding patriotism, but I am saying this referring to Bernt's dedication to their cause and struggle of the peoples in way of development, and it is that the dedication of our Brother Bernt is not the easy dedication of the moment, but the constant dedication of a whole life and that is the real and true nationalism.

I would like with regard to this topic of human rights to tell you present here that we are running a very great risk, one of the main problems we have, is that the socialist and social democrats at world level, have changed the meaning of the word socialism and democracy. Some have stolen away from us the word democracy, and others have stolen from us the word socialism. And the same thing can happen with human rights.

There is a lot of people who are talking about human rights. When many people who do not believe in socialism, in democracy, not in human rights, start to talk about these concepts, these concepts start to loose prestige. I do not have to pinpoint individualities regarding this, all of you know of this. How many times have we had to explain to our peoples the concept socialism, so that it would not be confused with a dictatorship. How many times did we have to explain that democracy is not identified with a dollar sign. And the same thing will happen with human rights if we do not rescue them. That is why I thought of the words of our Brother Rodrigo Borja, were very adequate when he defined these different categories of political rights, and social and economic rights, as a whole. This also was repeated by our Brother from Guatemala. Regarding the political rights I would like to make some comments and afterwards regarding economic rights. Obviously there is no doubt that the minimum of human rights with regard to their political aspects has to do with the freedom of expression, freedom of organization, and all the other freedoms, classical freedoms for which human beings have struggled for so many years and that have been concreted in a semi-formal matter during the French Revolution, but this is why it is accepted by everybody, it does not have much meaning. There are many countries in which this is denied daily, but everybody gives lip service to the topic of individual political rights. But there is a political right that is as important as these individual rights and without which these individual rights lose their support bases. This is what I would have called



the right to participation on the hand of the human beings in the decisions that affect their daily lives. This cannot be confused with the simple formal exercise every four, five, or ten years of participating in an electoral process. We cannot confuse these two concepts. Obviously this might be a constituted element of the participate of the right, but the political right to participation of human beings must be more direct, must be a daily right in the organizations that affect our daily life and we have to remember this when we are speaking among some socialists and social democrats. It is obvious that the right to participation in its first stage by colonialism, because colonialism by definition is the denial of the right one has to establish the rules that rule our own lives. If you are colony of Holland it is in Holland where they determine our daily life. If you are colony of the United States it is in the United States where they adopt the laws that determine our lives. This is the definition of colonialism, the government from abroad, from outside.

Now we find that theory sometimes that we can self-determine ourselves to deny oneself the self-determination per secula seculorum. In other words, the theory that forms part of the participative rights within a colonial situation, one can have the right to say whether you want to be a colony or not. And I can say that colonialism is not the only subjective phenomenon of the expression of will that I have given in a moment of history. Colonialism is an objective phenomenon. And it is defined by the fact that from the outside they rule your life internally, as happens in all colonies. Therefore what we can have is a colonialism without consentment and colonialism with an apparent consentment. The colonialism at first is the same colonialism as the ugly woman, she looks herself in the mirror in the morning, she says: "I am beautiful this morning and I like myself". Yet, but she is still ugly. Independently whether or not your life is the colony.

The colonized country finds itself in the same position, even though if there are periodical elections every two or four years and even though people are not tortured in the streets. It finds itself in the same relation as a child regarding a country. A seven year old child could theoretically sign a contract, but as soon as this goes to court it would be declared null, because there is not the capability to contract. And the same thing happens with the Indian bride in the tradition of that country and that is a promise to the bride, since she is a small girl, that she will marry a given individual.

She has to wait until she reaches a given age and she has to marry that individual and none other. If that individual dies then she can marry another guy. And with the colonies the same thing happens. First, the colony has to get married with independence and if after being independent it wants to get married with another, and we denied sovereignty, then we can do it. And I do not know if any people that has gotten married with freedom, that afterwards lived with another country under colonial regime.

And these concepts that seem to be theoretical and clear cut, are not the product of the imagination, are the product of the knowledge of countries that already were colonies; know what it means to be a colony. The Venezuelan Brothers know the difficulties they had to face when struggling for the independence when the Liberator said that the armies set opposed him, were composed mostly by bad sons of Venezuela that did not wish to attain freedom and there was no foreign aid at that time to manipulate the minds as happens today, but other types of mechanisms. That is why the free nations of the world have established the right to freedom, to independence as a peremptory norm of international law, a norm standard that cannot be discussed, is as the prohibition of that the laboury had in international level.

And the white slave trade, which means prostitution, nobody can do this. It is not a fact of whether I want to do it or you do not want to do it. And the same thing happens with the right to independence.

It is an international law right and it is an alienable right, because those countries that once were colony know what this psychological economic and military slavery meant. That is why the United Nations in the '46, '47, only in a very timid manner dares to speak of self-determination, not of independence. But when Africa and Asia in 1960 formed part of the United Nations, it is that against the opposition of Holland, the United States and France, that does not dare to vote against but abstain itself, is when the independence declaration is accepted that acknowledges the inalienable right of all peoples to their independence. And it is very explicit when it says of all the peoples that still have not reached their independence. There is not only the autonomous peoples it is of all the peoples that still have not reached their independence.

Today we see that of all nations that are still under a colonial regime, there are different manners and with which you can manipulate the elections, while the multinationals in Puerto Rico take away \$ 4 billion a year income. Half of all the incomes of the multinationals in Latin America come from Puerto Rico to maintain this level of super earnings. They impulse attacks to the North American taxpayer and they give free food to 35% of the unemployed Portoricans. The working North American Portorican serve to give subsidies to the multinationals and we ask; is he free to choose, he who sees that its food comes really from the United States? Is this freedom? That is why first we have to be independent to choose whether we want freedom or not, but it is not only the psychological aspect. Puerto Rico, a Spanish speaking country, a country that was in the plans of Bolivar for decolonization and independence, their English has been taught since 1901. North Americans got there since 1898, they has never held elections, they came in with bullets in 1901. From 1948 they were teaching all courses in English in our schools. And we can say for the proudness of Latin America that Portoricans still speak Spanish as Venezuelans and those of Costa Rica and all the West of Latin America.

Apart from this educational control, we have control through radio, through television and the many other mechanisms they have to manipulate the minds of the Portorican people. If this does not function, then they use directly pression.

13% of the lands in Puerto Rico are under a North American base, military bases. As soon as somebody misbehaves the marines are in Puerto Rico to immediately fall upon Venezuela, Santo Domingo, Grenada, where they will have to go. It is the spear point of the empire for Latin America. And when the independentist start to fly upward, the same thing that happened in 1950, happens again, that four of our brothers were kept for 25 years in a prison of the United States and they had to release their things to the pressure exercised by the Decolonization Committee of the United Nations. They have thousands of way to confuse men, so that they believe that it is better to kneel down than to stand up. The colonial mind is manipulated and afterwards they want to make us believe that we can freely determine ourselves not to be self-determined.

The danger in my country is not that we are a colony. How can we avoid being a colony if the United States, a country of 250 million inhabitants, that has under a neo-colonialism all of Latin America, in an island of 3 million inhabitants. The miracle is not that we are a colony, the miracle is that there are still people who struggle in Puerto Rico and that are willing to struggle against this powerful empire.

I would like to summarize the political aspects, saying that we have to conceive human rights : by specifying all this tradition : of freedom, not only in individual rights, but also in the participative rights. And I cannot ignore the words said by Rodrigo, regarding the economic and social rights. Without them the political rights are a vacuum.

If human rights stop when you enter the plant or the workshop you can write the same thing that Dante wrote in his great work: Leave behind all your hopes. Or can a man be a slave from eight in the morning to five in the afternoon, and free from five until eight a.m.? Can a man be submitted to capitalism that takes away his efforts for the benefits of others and at the same time sing to freedom, and to the banner and to the anthem? No, Anatole said this many years ago. The law allows both the poor as well as the rich the freedom, to ask for bread on the streets and to sleep beneath the bridges. We do not want the freedom of singing our problems in the poor sectors of our country. We want to have the right to participate in the decisions that affect our lives from the social, economic and cultural standpoint. This is socialism. And socialism is the basic human right. We have to consider the economic and political human rights as a whole, so that we can really believe in human rights. Let us not leave the human rights in the hands of those who are enemies of freedom to the totalitarian or imperialistic. The human rights are our inheritance of the social democrats of the whole world And we

must also realise, as several speakers have said before me, that this struggle cannot be carried or done by ourselves. The enemies of these human rights are through out the whole world and at different levels and this is our continent and we cannot be desecrated in this struggle against them, we have to unite ourselves to present a common front to attack or the attack against Grenada, the attack against Dominica or St. Lucia or Aruba or Curacao, Jamaica has to be considered an attack against Puerto Rico, against Guatemala, Salvador, Mexico. We have to feel on our own cheek the offense rendered to our brother. We cannot permit opportunism to separate us from this ideal of helping each other with regard to human rights. We have to accept the challenge of Mella, Duarte, Jose Martin, Bolivar, and we have to begin by the Caribbean, my dear brothers. This is where the vanguard lives. Here it will become in a bridge, so that they can exploit all of Latin America or we stop here in the Caribbean and we become a barrier against exploitation, either we unite or we will loose all our hopes.

Thank you very much.